

England's nativity plays Covid guidance 'unhelpful'

Vocabulary

exasperated

at loggerheads

to haemorrhage

ambiguous

Article

Headteachers in England are exasperated about messaging that in-person shows go ahead despite the Omicron variant. In Scotland, nativity plays are banned as part of Covid-related restrictions.

Geoff Barton, the general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders, said government advice had handed school leaders "a poisoned chalice". "Many will feel uncomfortable about going ahead, potentially putting them at loggerheads with parents as they try to manage their expectations."

A deputy-head said her school shifted the nativity play online due to high community infection rates, but noted this was "not an easy option as it involves hours of filming, editing and uploading".

Another headteacher feels the messaging does not reflect the challenges schools face at present. "I've heard people say in years gone by that the profession is haemorrhaging staff in the past but I never saw it. Now it's scary. Schools just don't have the time or staff to organise events."

A primary school headteacher said he had shifted the nativity play online after half-term since he felt "an early, clear decision" would be better for parents, staff and children. "We didn't want to risk parents booking time off work and a stage nativity being ready only to be cancelled at the last minute, as this causes a lot of upset and frustration for parents."

He added that the government guidance was "ambiguous" and that this "doesn't help in situations where the school and parents don't see eye to eye".

Quiz

1. Why did Geoff Barton describe the government's advice as a poisoned chalice?
2. What did one headteacher describe as scary?

Conversation

A: Mum! It's not fair... Danny got to be one of the three kings, and I'm a donkey!

B: What are you talking about, Johnny? You're not a donkey.

A: The school nativity play, mum, I always get the worst parts. I hate Christmas!

B: Well, you might be in luck, there's talk of cancelling it. The play I mean, not Christmas.

Discussion

1. Have you ever been given a "poisoned chalice"?
2. Have you ever seen or been in a school play? What was it about?
3. Imagine you could redesign Christmas - what changes would you make?